

## UKRAINE: A MESSAGE OF SUPPORT

February 28, 2022

Dear MassArt Community,

Yesterday, Sunday, was a beautiful, cold, “not a cloud in the sky” New England day. Over my second cup of coffee, I was deeply appreciative for this simple act and all the more grateful that my coffee was contained within a beautifully crafted, one-of-a-kind, ceramic mug that I had bought on Friday from our incredibly talented, energetic, and inspiring MassArt students. I was also feeling grateful and inspired by the beautiful and powerful exhibits that can be found once again across our MassArt campus and by the renewed energy that comes from meeting and seeing so many more members of our community. The Auction, the All-School Show, the Fashion Show and Commencement are all taking shape - and we have so much to look forward to and build upon!

At this same time, I am also mindful that half a world away, Ukrainian citizens are taking up arms to defend their democracy and their homeland and hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians are seeking refuge in surrounding countries while their loved ones stay behind to fight.

As I have been absorbing the news and thinking about MassArt, and our values and principles - I am reminded that the care and concern of our community have been consistent, essential ingredients to our success. So too has been our commitment to social justice and finding ways to make a difference.

A few years ago, at UNC Asheville, while I was serving as chancellor, we hosted a forum with Maria (Masha) Alyokhina, a founding member of Pussy Riot, who reminded us to protect democracy in our own countries. Alyokhina and two other members of the band were charged with “hooliganism” for their defiant opposition to Russian president Vladimir Putin; the three were sentenced to two years in prison. As she said in Asheville, “If you don’t fight for your democracy, you’ll lose it.” Alyokhina added, “I believe that the community of artists and human rights activists...I think that we are stronger than them and we somehow can overcome any situation.” (Asheville Citizen Times, November 16, 2016). Those powerful words resonate with me even more today, in light of the current situation in Ukraine.

We may wonder: what can we do? In a piece for Artnet News, Olesia Ostrovska-Liuta, director general of the Mystetskyi Arsenal National Art and Culture Complex in Kyiv, warned of the global consequences of Russia. “Remind yourselves and remind others that this war is a war against the whole civilized world, free thought, democratic values, and truth,” she wrote. “Include information about the ongoing Russian war in Ukraine into your public talks - mention this invasion at art and literature events that you attend... Bring this up at your exhibitions.” (Artnet News, February, 2022).

I’m also reminded of my friend, Tip O’Neill who famously said “all politics are local” in this moment as the world, including the United States, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and communities within the city of Boston show support for Ukraine, I’m reflecting on what we as a community and as individuals can do at this

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important moment in history. A few things immediately come to mind:

Here on campus:

- Student Development will partner with SGA and other student groups on ways to demonstrate solidarity and support around this crisis. Please look out for communications from them on this topic.
- The Treehouse Residence Hall will be illuminated in the blue and yellow colors of the Ukrainian flag tonight, and for the next several nights.

Numerous sites have been created to support the vast needs of the Ukrainian people. Needs range from supporting those who fled the country for safety; incredible need for food and shelter; supporting members of the LGBTQ+ community who face additional challenges, and much more. For those looking for ways to help, the International Education Center has collected the attached list of resources, which includes how to write to your local representative, how to stay informed, and how to donate to organizations directly aiding the people of Ukraine. For more information, please contact MassArt's International Education Center:

**International Education Center**

[international@massart.edu](mailto:international@massart.edu)

**Erica Puccio O'Brien, Director**

[erica.puccio@massart.edu](mailto:erica.puccio@massart.edu)

Think about how individually we can heed the calls to action from Maria or Olesia stated above, and engage in our democracy as citizens and powerfully as citizen artists.

We have tapped into that strong sense of community to get us through many challenges and differences over the years. We recognize that there are members of our community, our families, and our friends who have experienced violence, conflict, and crisis and there are many other conflicts going on in the world and even here in the U.S., and we can't forget those either. But as we are watching this situation that presents a global threat unfold, it also presents an opportunity to affirm our core values of justice and equity for all.

I'm proud to be a part of a community such as ours that cares about not only what happens locally but what happens around the world. In closing, I want to share a quote from Paul Farmer, who was a renowned physician and medical anthropologist originally from Western MA, who worked at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Mission Hill, but passed away last week. "The idea that some lives matter less is the root of all that is wrong with the world."

Today the people of Ukraine are fighting for their lives, their homes, their country, and our democracy and we have an opportunity to use our voices and art to be in solidarity with them.

Sincerely,



Mary K. Grant, PhD  
President  
Massachusetts College of Art and Design

## RESOURCES TO HELP THE PEOPLE OF UKRAINE

### 1. STAY INFORMED

- Suggested American and international outlets include: Associated Press: [Russia-Ukraine | Breaking News & Live Updates](#); Reuters: [Ukraine and Russia: What you need to know right now | Reuters](#); British Broadcasting Corporation: [Ukraine live updates – BBC News](#); AFP News Agency (Agence France Presse): [AFP News Agency](#).
- [Ukraine Now](#) provides verified sources and other ways to [Stand with Ukraine](#).

### 2. CONTACT YOUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

- [USAGov information](#) on how to contact your elected officials.
- A [template letter](#) you can use to email your representatives.

### 3. FIND A RALLY NEAR YOU

- [List of Protests](#): Stand with the people in Ukraine.
- [Ukrainian Boston Facebook Page](#): This group is dedicated to uniting all Ukrainians and Bostonians of all nationalities interested in participating in Ukrainian cultural activities in the Boston area.

*(Many of the above suggestions are from a [Boundless blog](#) posted on February 25, 2022. Visit the blog for more ideas.)*

### 4. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF AND OTHERS

- Students who find your mental health affected by the events in Ukraine, please contact the [Counseling and Wellness Center](#) and/or our 24 hour support program, [MySSP](#). Encourage your friends to take advantage of these resources.
- Faculty and staff can contact the Employee Assistance Program *Mass4You* by phone at 1-844-263-1982 or on [their website](#). This is a free and confidential program, available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week.

### 5. DONATE

- **UNICEF**: [UNICEF](#) supports health, nutrition, HIV prevention, education, safe drinking water, sanitation and protection for children and families caught in the conflict in Ukraine.
- **Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders**: MSF runs [a range of activities in Ukraine](#) to help people travel to health care facilities and access prescribed medications.
- **Voices of Children**: Helps provide psychological and psychosocial support to [children affected](#) by the armed conflict, including art therapy, video storytelling, providing mobile psychologists and more.
- **International Committee of the Red Cross**: This [Switzerland-based organization](#) is aiming to help people affected by the conflict and support the work of the Ukrainian Red Cross.
- **UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)**: The international organization [aims to provide emergency assistance to families in Ukraine](#) — providing [aid such as cash assistance and opportunities](#) for resettlement in the U.S.
- **Razom for Ukraine**: [Razom for Ukraine](#) is a Ukrainian-American nonprofit dedicated to unlocking Ukraine's democratic potential by creating collaborative spaces that foster international civic engagement.
- The resources above and other organizations seeking donations can be found in articles published by [WBUR](#) and [Time](#).